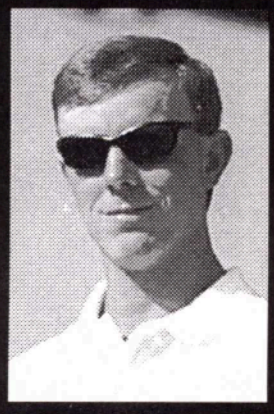
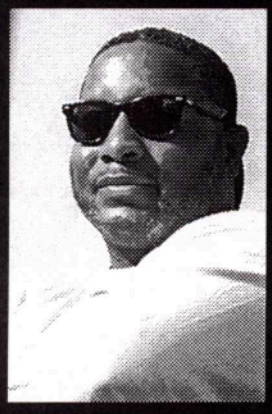
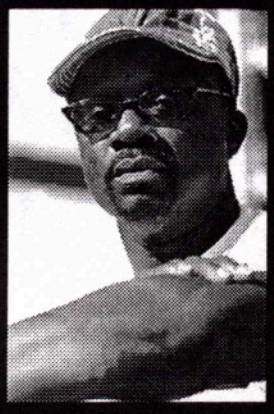
Victory & solidarity rally with the

Charleston 5

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Last November, five dockworkers in South Carolina won a victory when authorities dropped plans to prosecute them on felony charges after a police attack on their picket line. After enduring more than 18 months under house arrest, they won their freedom through an international labor solidarity campaign.

In the spirit of May Day, the Charleston Five, members of the International Longshoresmen's Association, and Leonard ujikukulljklRiley of ILA Local 1422, are coming to thank the Chicago labor movement for our support.

They're also here show solidarity for local struggles like the Carousel strikers, who have on the picket line for more than six months in their fight for a UNITE union contract.

Come help celebrate a major labor victory and show your support for Carousel strikers and other labor struggles!

SUPPORT THE CAROUSEL STRIKERS!

ERIC RUDER

6:30pm Thurs., May 2

UNITE Hall

333 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago

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FOR MORE INFO, CALL 312-738-6159

Jul 30 01 12:55a CERSC

Memorandum

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
815 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 / (202) 637-5000

TO: President's of International Unions
President's of State Federations
Principal Officers of Central Labor Council's

FROM: John J. Sweeney
President

DATE: January 22, 2001

RE: Charleston, South Carolina Dockworkers Defense Campaign

In late 1999 and early 2000, members of ILA Local, 1422 and Local 1771 in Charleston, South Carolina, peacefully protested the introduction of a non-union stevedore company. The State of South Carolina's Attorney General mobilized 600 state police, along with armored personnel carriers in response. A "disturbance" was provoked by the police, workers were hurt, and arrests followed.

The State of South Carolina is charging 5 ILA members with rioting. As a result, they are facing the prospect of serious jail time. 27 other ILA Local 1422 and Local 1771 members are facing civil suits by the non union stevedore company, aimed at ruining their lives, in a mean spirited act of revenge.

The South Carolina AFL-CIO has initiated a "Campaign for Workers' Rights in South Carolina" as an effort to build a national defense for these ILA members. The national AFL-CIO is assisting in this effort and I ask your help.

Contributions to assist in the legal defense of the ILA Local 1422 and Local 1771 members may be sent to:

Dockworkers Defense Fund
910 Morrison Drive
Charleston, SC 29403

The South Carolina AFL-CIO's "Campaign for Workers' Rights in South Carolina" also needs your help. Local defense committees of the campaign are needed across the USA. Assistance in starting these committees would be invaluable.

This campaign brings to the fore basic constitutional issues regarding freedom of speech and association not to mention the statutory right of all workers to organize.

For more information on this critical struggle, and details regarding the "Campaign for Workers' Rights in South Carolina" please call the South Carolina AFL-CIO at (803) 798-8300.

JJS/ad

Teamsters Local Union 705

chartered as

Truck Drivers, Oil Drivers, Filling Station and Platform Workers Local Union No. 705

AFFILIATED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS, AFL-CIO

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July 20, 2001

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am writing to ask for your support for one of the most important battles in the labor movement today.

On January 20, 2000, members of International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422, 1422A and 1771 walked a picket line in defense of their jobs in Charleston, South Carolina. More than 600 riot police on horseback, in helicopters and in armored vehicles attacked the picket line. Arrests followed.

Today, five members of Local 1422 are facing five years in prison on felony riot charges because South Carolina Attorney General Charles Condon is prosecuting this case as part of his political agenda. In fact, they are already being punished--they have been under house arrest for more than 18 months. Along with workers' rights, racial justice is central to this fight. ILA Local 1422, with an overwhelmingly African-American membership, is a leading force in the civil rights movement in South Carolina and has been an active participant in the effort to remove the Confederate battle flag from the state capitol.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has called upon the entire labor movement to defend the Charleston Five. Funds are urgently needed--legal costs alone are expected to run as high as $2 million. To meet this need, defense committees have been formed in several cities, including the Chicago Committee to Defend the Charleston Five. ILA Local 1422 president Kenneth Riley has been touring the country, speaking before labor, civil rights and social justice organizations to build support.

I am pleased to announce that Brother Riley will speak in Chicago at Teamsters Local 705 Hall, Ashland and Van Buren, on Friday, August 17, at 7:00 p.m. Also supporting this fund-raising effort are Dolores Withers, President of College Clerical and Technical Personnel, Local 1708, IFT/AFT, and Sue Schulz, President of Local 3506, AFSCME. We would like to invite all Chicago labor and civil rights organizations to join with us in endorsing this event, and to build support for the Charleston Five.

For further information or to endorse this event, please contact the Chicago Committee to Defend the Charleston Five at 773/794-5199 or chicagoc5@hotmail.com. Letters may be faxed to 773/913-2899.

In solidarity,

Gerald Zero

Gerald Zero
Secretary-Treasurer

EMPLOY UNION LABOR—INVEST IN THE BEST

Form 734 M

created. You have workers with a decent standard of living precisely because they are unionized and organized. And I don't think that fact escaped the attorney general or other anti-union forces in South Carolina."

Riley also pointed out how important these union jobs are in the community.

"These longshore jobs are the only jobs in South Carolina where a Black can really move up from below poverty to a middle class standard of living in a short time if he comes out and applies himself," Riley said. "It's the only job where young blacks who may have gotten themselves in serious trouble early on in life and paid their dues to society can get a second chance. We have so many stories like that."

The longshore workers' commitment to the community extended to political action, and that brought down attacks on union members' democratic rights, Riley said.

"Our problems began when we started getting involved in state politics," he said. "We were trying to be socially responsible to those around us. We can't sit there and say 'We got ours, forget about everybody else.' So we wanted to start trying to put people in positions to change what's going on in South Carolina."

Labor helped elect the first Democratic governor in South Carolina in 12 years, who in turn nominated Riley to the State Ports Authority. The South Carolina Manufacturing Alliance and the state Chamber of Commerce went berserk and managed to pressure the governor into withdrawing Riley's nomination. Republican state legislators then introduced a bill—dubbed the Kenneth Riley Bill—prohibiting union members from serving on state boards and commissions. Its proponents touted it as a way to reduce union influence in state politics—in a state where only 3.8 percent of the workers are in unions. The bill passed the House, but was killed in the state Senate.

Currently local defense committees for the Charleston 5 are being formed around the country. South Carolina AFL-CIO President Donna DeWitt has requested all State Labor Federations to take the lead in the formation of these committees and urge their member unions and the Union Cities in their jurisdictions to get involved.

The committees will try to bring in community organizations, civil rights groups, religious and academic institutions, and other political activists to help raise money for the defense fund and to be ready to take part in an international day of action when the criminal trial begins. They will also work to get media coverage of the issue and the local community's response to the situation.

This piece is based on a story from The Dispatcher, *newspaper of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.*

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Start or join a local defense committee for the Charleston 5. (Call 803-798-8300 for the contact nearest you.)
- Participate in the upcoming International Day of Action.
- Work with your local to pass a resolution in support of the Charleston 5 and formally endorse the defense work.
- Take information about the case to community, church or other groups you're part of and enlist their support.
- Donate money to the defense fund. Please make checks to "Dockers Defense Fund" and send to the Campaign for Workers' Rights in South Carolina, PO Box 21777. Charleston, SC 29413 or to the Defense Fund, 910 Morrison Dr., Charleston, SC 29403, Attn: Robert J. Ford.

YOUR LOCAL CONTACT:

mer:opeiu29/afl-cio

Campaign for Workers' Rights in South Carolina

a project of the South Carolina AFL-CIO

For defending their jobs, five longshore workers—members of ILA longshore Local 1422 and clerks and checkers Local 1771 in Charleston, South Carolina—face possible imprisonment on federal criminal charges.

They and some 150 co-workers planned to picket a ship in their port that was using a non-union longshore crew when the state responded with a massive contingent of law enforcement officers and an altercation ensued. The five have been indicted for rioting, a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. They could face trial as early as this February. The South Carolina AFL-CIO, with the help of the national AFL-CIO, has initiated an international campaign to defend them and their locals—one of which, Local 1422, is overwhelmingly African American.

"This is a very compelling case, one that brings together all the issues, voice at work and the right to organize, issues of racial justice and issues of democracy," said Bill Fletcher, assistant to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and AFL-CIO liaison to the campaign.

Besides the criminal charges, the stevedoring company that hired the scabs is suing the two Charleston locals, their presidents and 27 members for $1.5 million in alleged losses it suffered because of the picket line disrupting work. The suit raises the issue of whether workers can be held financially responsible for industrial actions, and raises the specter of bankruptcy for the locals and these individual workers and their families.

The trouble began Oct. 1, 1999 when Nordana Lines notified the ILA locals it was ending its 23-year relationship with the union and would begin using non-union labor to work its ships. The local responded with picket lines. After peaceful pickets resulted in slight delays to two Nordana ships, the state of South Carolina—which prides itself on being right-to-work state and advertises itself to investors as having the lowest rate of unionization in the country—decided it was going to break the longshore union's power.

To protect the "right" of some 20 scabs to work the Nordana ship, *Skodsborg*, Jan. 20, the state sent in some 600 police in riot gear. Some rode on horses and others drove armored vehicles. Helicopters circled overhead and police patrol boats cruised the waterside of the terminal.

"You would think there was going to be a terrorist attack on the State of South Carolina," Ken Riley, president of Local 1422, said of the police presence.

The police marshalled at the terminal and, for extra provocation, in front of the union's hall about 150 yards away. The longshore workers stayed away from the terminal, letting the police stay out in the rain and cold by themselves and waste lots of taxpayer money. Later in the evening the workers reassembled at the hall and then went out toward the terminal to exercise their legal right to picket.

According to Riley, the police initiated the clash, pushing back the group of pickets. Trying to

continued inside

calm the situation, Riley and other union officers created a buffer between the police and the pickets. At that point one of the cops ran out of formation and clubbed Riley on the head. Then a fight began.

When it was over the police arrested eight longshore workers on charges of misdemeanor trespassing. At this point State Attorney General Charlie Condon rushed in, took the case away from local law enforcement officials, and raised the misdemeanor charges to felony rioting charges.

> **"With ILA Local 1422 you have a minority local that's strong and is very involved in the political roots of the communiy. State Republicans are using the longshore union as an example because they are strong leaders..."**
>
> *-South Carolina AFL-CIO President Donna Dewitt*

At a preliminary hearing a judge dismissed the felony charges for lack of evidence, but Condon then went to the Grand Jury and sought and obtained indictments against five of the defendants, on the same charges that had just been dismissed. Condon has made it clear he intends to prosecute the workers vigorously and has said his plan for them includes "jail, jail and more jail."

At the same time WSI, the non-union stevedoring company that supplied the scab workers, sued Local 1422 and Ken Riley and Local 1771, the Charleston checkers and clerks local, and its president John Alvones for $1.5 million in alleged financial losses.

Nordana came back to the negotiating table last April and in three days the company and the union came to an agreement both sides could live with. Nordana said high costs pushed it to abandon the union, so the two sides sat down with the ILA contract to see if they could find a solution. The contract includes a provision called the "small boat agreement" for container ships with a capacity of 500 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalents) or less. Under that section working a "small boat" requires the same wages, but some reduced manning and only a four-hour guarantee as opposed to the regular eight hours. It turned out that all along Nordana's ships had fallen into that category.

Having reached an agreement with the local, Nordana urged WSI to do the same. But WSI pressed on, filing for a summary judgment, claiming the union was clearly at fault and the company had obviously suffered damages, so there was no need for a court hearing. But WSI lost that motion.

The company then amended its complaint to add the names of 27 longshore workers to the list of defendants liable for its losses. It got the names by asking people under oath in depositions to identify all the workers they recognized from pictures of earlier peaceful picketing. The judge allowed the amendment, but warned WSI that if any of its accusations turn out to be frivolous, the company could be sued in return.

The locals immediately responded by filing unfair labor practice charges against WSI with the National Labor Relations Board for retaliating against the workers for exercising their legally protected right to picket.

Locals 1422 and 1771 discussed an out of court settlement with WSI Oct. 27, but the company wouldn't make any reasonable compromise. Riley said the local was willing to settle the lawsuit for some nominal amount without admitting any guilt because of what it could cost in legal fees to vindicate themselves.

"We have more serious charges to concentrate on," he said, referring to the criminal indictments. "We need to focus on these other guys who stand a chance of going to prison. If these guys are convicted based on being identified through photos, by just having been there, the next time there's a struggle and we have to go to a picket line, workers will be reluctant to picket."

Currently the local's attorneys figure the criminal case will not go to court until February 2001. In the meantime the Charleston 5 are still under a strict curfew that requires them to stay home between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. if they are not working or at a union meeting and travel restrictions that don't allow them to leave the state.

The South Carolina and the national AFL-CIO are mounting a campaign in defense of the Charleston 5. They know they have an uphill fight.

"The Attorney General is planning to run for governor next time around and he's trying to make a name for himself," said South Carolina AFL-CIO President Donna Dewitt. "I think he plans to make himself a name at the expense of these five guys."

The Jan. 20 incident happened about the same time as 47,000 people—mostly African Americans—marched and demanded the Confederate flag be taken down from the state capitol.

"That scared the Republicans to death in this state," Dewitt said. "And here you have a minority local union that's strong and is very involved in the political roots of the community. They're using the longshore union as an example because they are strong leaders and the state doesn't want others to see them that way."

graphic by Frank Wilder

The campaign will seek the acquittal of the Charleston 5 and complete vindication of the 27 targeted workers and the locals and their officers in the WSI civil case—while building a strong case for workers' rights and exposing the racist efforts of the state to limit Black power in South Carolina. The plans include setting up local defense committees in cities around the country and organizing national days of action.

The case merits such focus because the employers and the state violated many fundamental rights, Fletcher said. They attacked workers' rights to collective action in many forms, and specifically African American workers rights to a decent living and full political participation.

"What you have in South Carolina is a situation where the police, under the apparent leadership of the Attorney General, are clamping down on workers' rights to peacefully protest," Fletcher said. "If they don't have that right, then effectively workers there don't have any kind of rights to organize, regardless of what's on the books."

Fletcher also said the racial component of the struggle, especially because it is happening in South Carolina, home of the Confederate flag controversy, makes it particularly important.

"Local 1422 is a largely African American local, a very important segment of the Charleston community," he said. "It is significant that they are under attack because they are living proof that unionization is the best anti-poverty program ever

continued on back

FOR WALKING A PICKET LINE

THESE FIVE MEN COULD GO TO JAIL

THESE FIVE MEN HAVE BEEN UNDER HOUSE ARREST FOR 19 MONTHS -- FOR WALKING A PICKET LINE

- On January 20, 2000, members of the International Longshoremen's Association in Charleston, South Carolina, walked a peaceful picket line to protest the introduction of a non-union company into their port.
- They were met by 600 police in riot gear. A disturbance ensued.
- South Carolina State Attorney General Charlie Condon, who is running for governor, seized the case from local law enforcement officials and indicted five longshoremen on felony riot charges.
- These five members of the ILA now face five years in prison.
- They have already been under house arrest for more than eighteen months.

WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE CIVIL RIGHTS

- Racial justice is also central to this fight.
- ILA Local 1422, with an overwhelmingly African-American membership, is a leading force in the civil rights movement in South Carolina.
- These arrests occurred about a week after 47,000 people, mostly African-Americans, marched in South Carolina to demand that the Confederate flag be taken down from the state capitol.

RALLY FOR THE CHARLESTON FIVE

Kenneth Riley, president of ILA Local 1422 in Charleston, will be speaking in Chicago on **Friday, August 17, at 7:00 p. m., at Teamsters Local 705 Hall** (at Ashland and Van Buren).

Sponsored by Gerald Zero, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 705 and the Chicago Committee to Defend the Charleston Five. This event is endorsed by the AFL-CIO, Chicago Jobs with Justice, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, SEIU Illinois State Council, United Steelworkers of America (USWA) District 7, Chicago Black Radical Congress, Chicago Metro Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), United Electrical Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE) District 11, AFSCME Local 2858, AFT Local 1708* President Dolores Withers, AFSCME Local 3506* President Sue Schulz, USWA Local 2154* President Apolinar Quiroz, Latino Organization of the Southwest* Executive Director Hector Rico, International Socialist Organization, UIC Graduate Employees Organization, Chicago Metro Labor Party, Socialist Organizer, and many more to come.

(* Organization listed for identification purposes only.)

Hoffa Supports Charleston Five

General President Calls for South Carolina to Free Longshoremen

July 27, 2001

Press Releases
Headline News

At rallies held in Seattle and San Francisco, a statement by Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa in support of the Charleston Five was read to labor leaders and union members.

In Seattle, Local 174 President Scott Sullivan addressed a rally sponsored by the Central Labor Council in Hoffa's behalf. Chuck Mack, International Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer of Local 70, addressed a San Francisco audience.

Hoffa called for unity between the Teamsters and longshoremen unions as well as an end to the persecution of the Charleston Five. The Charleston Five is a group of South Carolina longshoremen who were viciously attacked by police and police dogs, while lawfully protesting unfair work practices on the Charleston docks.

Statement By
General President James P. Hoffa
In Support of the Struggle
To Free The Charleston Five

Big business has done everything in its power to weaken organized labor. Encouraged by South Carolina government officials, Nordana lines took the low road by hiring scabs at near minimum wage, with no benefits. Then South Carolina state police unleashed vicious attack dogs on the lawfully protesting longshoremen.

This was not just an attack against organized labor and the decent living standards we have fought so hard to achieve for our members. South Carolina officials are attacking the right of its citizens to lawfully speak out against injustice and economic exploitation.

The plight of the Charleston Five shows more than ever the need for labor unity. This is where we must turn our words into action. The Teamsters Union has joined with the ILA and the ILWU in an

historic partnership to ensure that the waterfront is restored to its former strength. We have pledged to make ports in the United States and Canada wall-to-wall union.

I urge all Teamsters and all of organized labor to support the struggle to free the Charleston Five. If South Carolina succeeds in muzzling the Charleston Five, any of us could be next. That is why we demand: Free The Charleston Five!

Send your comments to: feedback@teamster.org
©1997-2001 The International Brotherhood of Teamsters
25 Louisiana Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20001
(202) 624-6800

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Secretary-Treasurer Keegel | Join the Teamsters

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Remarks by ILA Local 1422 President Kenneth Riley to the ILWU Longshore Caucus

On March 1, 2000 International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 President Kenneth Riley addressed the ILWU Longshore Caucus meeting in San Francisco. Riley's local in the Port of Charleston, South Carolina has been under attack—one shipping line there has begun using non-union labor. The state responded to the local's picketing with a huge show of force by police who started a violent confrontation with union longshoremen Jan. 20. Now the South Carolina attorney General is charging four members with felony conspiracy and riot charges. ILWU longshore Local 10 responded with sending a $5,000 contribution to the Local 1422 defense fund, sending two delegates to Charleston and bringing a resolution of support to the Longshore Caucus. After Riley spoke to the Caucus, the delegates voted to donate another $50,000 to the defense fund. The next day Riley addressed longshore Local 13's membership meeting and received another $50,000 from them. The following is a slightly edited version of Riley's speech to the Longshore Caucus explaining his local's struggle.

The ILWU Coast Committee presents ILA Local 1422 President Kenneth Riley with a $50,000 check for his local's defense fund. (left to right) Coast Committeemen Bob McElrath, Ray Ortiz, Jr., Riley and International Vice President Jim Spinosa.
photo by Dave Arian

Good morning, brothers and sisters. Let me just say, first of all, how deeply appreciative I am for being allowed to be in your presence today, not because of the struggle that we are in, but because we on the East Coast have heard so much about this great organization. We know of your legacy. We keep up with some of the struggles that you on this coast have had. So, we are indeed grateful for this opportunity to be with you today.

I bring you greetings from the ILA, especially from the Port of Charleston. On behalf of Local 1422, the longshore local that I represent, 1422A, the container maintenance, maintenance and repair, and 1771, the clerks and checkers, we bring you greetings. We have been involved in a struggle. We felt

that it was time to draw the line in the sand.

For the first time in Charleston, South Carolina, we found that a non-ILA, nonunion operation was going to handle containers. We felt that that was a threat. As we all know, containerization is the wave of the future.

We have been doing work for this line, Nordana, for over 23 years. We had a long-standing relationship.

On the East Coast, we have what is called the Container Carrier Council that represents all the major steamship lines. It is about a 36-member organization. But there are other carriers that are not members of the council that are subscribers to the agreement. In other words, they agree to live up to the terms and the conditions of the contract negotiated with the carriers and would employ the ILA under those terms and conditions. Nordana is one of those that subscribes to that agreement. When you add the members along with those that subscribe to that agreement, you are talking about 76 different carriers that control probably 93 to 95 percent of all containers moving along the East and Gulf Coast.

In the Port of Charleston, Nordana can simply decide at any time, "We are done with the ILA, we are going to go to an alternative workforce." Nordana served notice on us some two months before the first vessel was going to work non-ILA. We immediately engaged our employers to find out what was going on. We found that Nordana was claiming to have financial problems around the world and this was going to be some type of corporate decision.

We initiated meetings with our employers, Nordana and the port authority. We had five different meetings with the port authority to try to get them to understand that while Nordana represented only *less than one-tenth of one percent of the work in Charleston, why would we allow such a small piece* of business to disrupt 30 years of harmony and growth in the Port of Charleston. We have had our problems contractually, but always we sat down and we continued to work until we reached some form of an agreement. However, this was not going to be the case with Nordana. They had already told us that their decision was pretty much final.

Kenneth Riley
photo by Steve Stallone

In spite of that we put together a concessionary package for them crafted after an agreement that they had with the Houston longshore local. We offered them a reduction in a move of desperation. We offered a package that translated into a 50 percent reduction in labor costs. Everyone in the industry other than Nordana felt that that was an agreement they simply could not refuse. Unfortunately, they did, which led to us believe there was much more to it than just economics. This was going to be a defining moment where the union would be attacked. We felt it was not only coming from Nordana, but it was coming from the state itself.

We had four alternatives we placed on the table. One, they would continue to do business with the non-ILA company, and the port authority and the state would continue to provide the kind of costly protection they were providing.

The second alternative was that they would now take their vessel out of Charleston to a smaller South Carolina port, Georgetown, South Carolina, which was pretty much a nonunion facility.

Thirdly, they sit down and negotiate an agreement with ILA.

Fourth, they would have to leave the port.

Immediately the port authority pulled the first option off the table. There was no way they were going to continue to provide such costly protection for them every time that vessel comes to Charleston.

The option of going to Georgetown proved to be logistically impossible for Nordana with the rail situation.

The third option was to sit down with the ILA. We met and tried to work out something with them. It didn't work.

We got in touch with the port authority to say, "Look, we want that fourth option put in place." At that time, we were told by the director of the port that it was now out of his hands. He had gotten orders from the state to let everything stay just like it is. They were ready to challenge the union even though Nordana is such a small piece of business and that type of disruption can spill over into all these other operations that we have valued for so many years. Sixteen of the top 20 lines in the world call on the Port of Charleston. To sacrifice all of that for this small piece of business, something was just not right.

Four days prior to the next Nordana ship coming in we received a call from some of our friends in law enforcement. They had had three law enforcement summits regarding this particular situation. They told us that we were not going to believe what we were going to see on Jan. 20th. When that day came, I did not believe what was out there. Early that day they had started to bus in all the police protection, 600 law enforcement officers. They were all dressed in riot gear. Some were on horses. Helicopters in the air. Boats in the water. Armored vehicles. You would think there was going to be a terrorist attack on the State of South Carolina.

Our union headquarters are just about 150 yards from the entrance to the terminal. We were in full view of everything that was taking place. Not only did they set up down at the terminal, they were in front of our building. Very intimidating, very provoking.

Prior to that night there had not been one single incident with any law enforcement officers that merited that type of show of force. Again, the Attorney General, after getting involved in this situation, ordered that type of show of force.

We thought at that time that the best thing to do was simply not even show. We were going to let them stay out there by themselves. They were already spending the taxpayers' money. The ship was to begin working at 7:00. At 6:00 o'clock we told our members, the three locals combined, "Look, we are not going to go down, we have nothing to gain. We could not get to the ship, we could not even get to the gate, forget it."

It was just too heavily guarded. They had a squad car every 50 yards around the entire circumference of the port authority, inside the fence and outside the fence. On the waterside of the terminal they had police patrol boats, probably about seven of them, patrolling the water side. So, you could forget getting down there. It was dark. No one could read our signs.

That went over very well at 6:00 to 7:00 o'clock that evening. I told our members, "Look, they are already spending this money. When the media reports on what took place tonight, they would be the ones to look like fools. They were down there and we were not.

"I asked them to go home. But I wanted to keep these officers out there all night, spend that money all night. I wanted everybody to set their alarm clocks for 11:00 or 11:30 and fill the parking lot back up at midnight. By that time we felt they would have sent several of the law enforcement officers home, and when they saw us reassembling they would have to call them all back. That was just a strategy to make them spend the money.

At midnight we would decide whether we would do it again. It was cold, it was wet. We wanted them to stay out there all night long.

I stayed around with a couple other officers from the other two locals to monitor the situation between 7:00 and 12:00. About 9:30 they sent 40 cars back to the upper state with four patrolmen in each one of them. But at 11:30, when we started reassembling, most of those cars started heading back down just like we thought they would.

At 11:30 we received a call upstairs that I had better come downstairs because the men are showing back up and they are now saying they are going to go down there. We went back downstairs. While we were making our way to the podium, these members started saying, "There is no need to tell us not to go down there, we are angery. We can hardly get back to our own union hall."

We told them, "Okay, for all of those who have to go, go ahead, but be careful and do not engage the officers."

In less than 20 minutes after going down there, the law enforcement officers engaged them. They began their riot march and started to push back. The confrontation began. In less than 20 minutes we received a call that the first guy was laying on the pavement with his head busted open. It was a clerk and checker.

We ran down there and started trying to push our guys back, to get them out of there. It sounded like a bunch kids in a junkyard beating on tin cans. That is the type of clash that was taking place. We ran

up to the front of the line and we created a buffer between the law enforcement officers and our members. About the time we had fully established that buffer and got everything under control, one of the officers ran out of formation, clubbed me on the head and ran back into the formation. When that happened, everything just went wild.

ILWU Longshore Local 10 President Lawrence Thibeaux (left) addresses longshore workers at the Port of Charleston demonstration. Local 10 Executive Board member Jack Heyman (second from left) also attended.
photo by Alex Schivas

Nine men were charged with misdemeanor trespassing. All those charges were dropped. The Attorney General's office was clearly embarrassed by the fact that they didn't present enough evidence to convict these guys. But he pledged at the time those charges were dropped that he was going to go to the Grand Jury, he was going to seek federal indictment against these individuals. Out of the nine they think that they only have enough information to indict four. They don't have anything. We have challenged them to come forward with anything they have. They don't have a thing.

The video that they have subpoenaed, we have subpoenaed as well. The video clearly shows who was the aggressor. We feel certain that we are going get the charges dropped somewhere along the way. However, we cannot be sure of that because South Carolina is an anti-union state, a right-to-work state. Prior to last year it was the least organized state in the union. We just surpassed North Carolina because of a very aggressive organizing campaign that we put on last year, had a 90 percent success rate in all the elections that were conducted in the State of South Carolina.

We have a serious organizing campaign. Because of those victories, it has really angered the likes of the South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce. We have one of the most powerful Chambers of Commerce in the country. They pride themselves on that. They are so well knit together, they so well control the House of Representatives, they say they can in effect write their own legislation and just hand it to them. And they have been doing that.

In South Carolina we are one of only two states that do not comply with the federal minimum wage law. We are the only state without a national holiday for Martin Luther King. We are the only state

that still flies the Confederate flag over our state capital. The only state that is under economic boycott by the NAACP. We are only state that I know of right now that has an all white Supreme Court. We are constantly going backwards in South Carolina. It all has to do with the anti-worker mentality, anti-union mentality that exists in the State of South Carolina.

It was not coincidental that coming up to this incident that occurred in Charleston—they like to keep calling it a riot, we just consider it an incident—everything that has happened has happened not in the streets of Charleston, not downtown where you are blowing out windows and plundering and so forth, it has all happened on the job site. So, we don't consider it a riot, we consider it a job action that unfortunately turned violent.

There are several pieces of anti-union legislation that came about and were introduced because of this incident. They use that incident to say this is the reason why we need tougher anti-union, tougher right-to-work laws in South Carolina. They have introduced legislation right now that almost makes it virtually impossible for a union to collect any form of dues or assessments from their members. The law actually makes it illegal that as a condition of employment that the union can assess any fees, any dues or revenue obtaining measures against their members.

The other piece of legislation has to do with making it illegal for any card-carrying union member in the State of South Carolina to be appointed to any board, agency or commission in the State of South Carolina. In the last election, 1998, we had an opportunity to elect the first Democratic Governor in 12 years. Labor got very actively involved in that campaign. Labor delivered. We elected a Democratic governor [Jim Hodges]. As a result, for the first time in the State of South Carolina, the Governor reached back and appointed a labor person, myself, to his transition team.

Then he came back and said, "Look, we want to do something for labor and we want to do something for you in the maritime community, which would be for the first time in the history of the State of South Carolina that someone from the maritime industry would be appointed to the board of the South Carolina State Port Authority." He nominated me. Within three days, the South Carolina Manufacturing Alliance and the South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce issued what they called a grassroots alert to every business person in the State of South Carolina: "We must stop that appointment, we must defeat that appointment because it will send a message around the world that South Carolina is now open to labor unions, that we are embracing labor unions in the State of South Carolina, and that is something that cannot happen."

They began to canvas their representatives. Even though they mounted such an attack, we did have the votes in the Democratic-controlled Senate. However, the Governor folded under such pressure and pulled back the nomination. It looked like big business once again has crushed the labor movement in the State of South Carolina. Because he had made an attempt to place labor on the board, the legislation now comes forward to say that it will be illegal for any card-carrying union member to serve on any board, any commission in the State of South Carolina. They term that bill the Kenneth Riley bill. It has passed the House, but it will be dead on arrival when it gets to the Senate, thanks to our friends over there.

That is just to give you an idea what we are faced with in South Carolina. Not only are we having the immediate problem with Nordana, it goes much deeper than that. It's an all out attack, it's a violation of civil rights that is occurring in the State of South Carolina. It is unconstitutional. We served notice on those legislators that if this bill were to somehow pass, the day it passes is the day we file a lawsuit. It's unconstitutional. It's discriminatory.

Again, we appreciate all the support from all the ILWU people up and down the coast. Those people in the trenches, those hard working people now facing felony charges, it was very encouraging to them to know that they are not in this struggle alone.

We would love to have an opportunity to reciprocate with you at any time you should be faced with a struggle. I don't think from the ILA perspective that support has always been there, that networking of East Coast workers and West Coast dock work. We know in fact that our industry has become global in nature. We know our economy is global in nature. As was said earlier, so must our workforce. We must become global in our perspective in looking at things so that we can continue to build a strong network of working people around the world through organizations such as the ITF, the International Dockworkers Council and any other organization that may come about that brings working people together around the world.

I feel that if we are going to survive in the 21st Century, we are going to have to strengthen those ties. We have to rebuild and tear down some of those old walls of tradition. Workers are going to have to unite so that wherever there are working people in a struggle, not only in this country, but around the world, that workers everywhere else can rise to their support and bring relief in a very timely manner.